

North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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STATE WATER BOARD REMANDS REGULATORY ACTIONS FOR PACIFIC LUMBER COMPANY TO REGIONAL WATER BOARD

Santa Rosa. On January 23, 2002, the State Water Resources Control Board (State Board) considered the Petition of the Humboldt Watershed Council, Jesse Noel And Ken Miller requesting Waste Discharge Requirements or other appropriate regulatory actions be taken against the Pacific Lumber Company for timber harvest operations in the Freshwater Creek and Elk River watersheds and three tributaries to the Eel River. The State Board remanded the issues raised in the petition back to the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board (Regional Water Board) for appropriate action.

The Regional Water Board intends to respond to the State Board's directives as promptly as possible. Efforts being contemplated to comply with the State Board's directives include some, all, or a combination of the following actions:

Expediting development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for Elk River and Freshwater Creek

Development of watershed-wide water quality monitoring efforts in cooperation with affected landowners for Elk River, Freshwater Creek, and the three Eel River tributaries as needed. These monitoring efforts would be intended to build on existing monitoring work being conducted by the Pacific Lumber Company. Water quality monitoring stations and parameters may be added to effectively monitor the water quality trends of the sediment-impaired watersheds, allow detection and early correction of problem areas, and determine compliance with California water quality standards. Project-specific monitoring efforts would be folded-into the watershed-wide plan as needed.

Development of project-specific monitoring programs in cooperation with the affected landowners and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for timber harvesting plans and other projects which pose a high threat to water quality in Freshwater Creek, Elk River and the three tributaries of the Eel River.

Issuance of regulatory actions on specific timber harvest operations or other projects where a discharge or a threatened discharge of sediment are affecting or could affect beneficial water uses, and prompt action is needed prior to completion of the TMDL process.

All five of these streams are considered to be impaired due to sediment discharges. TMDLs are a systematic assessment designed to restore the health of a polluted body of water by 1) defining the water quality impairment 2) identifying the sources of pollution 3) defining the desired target condition of the stream 4) and implementing a regulatory strategy to attain those targets and ensure compliance with water quality standards.

Susan Warner, Executive Officer of the Regional Water Board, said, "TMDLs are watershed-wide tools which can protect and restore water quality. Additional regulatory and planning activities also may be appropriate based on site-specific circumstances and the threat to water quality." She indicated that the Regional Water Board staff expected to work closely and cooperatively with all stakeholders in the watersheds during development of the TMDLs.

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